University of Illinois offers pay hikes

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SPRINGFIELD -- Faculty and staff in Springfield and other University of Illinois campuses will get an average 1.5 percent pay increase in the upcoming school year.

University of Illinois Chancellor Richard Ringeisen said in a memo sent Monday to university employees and obtained by the State Journal-Register that tough economic times limited what university officials could give out.

"We wish that we could do more," Ringeisen wrote. "But with the uncertainty in the economy and state finances, we think this is the responsible action for now."

UIS spokeswoman Cheryl Peck could not be reached for comment late Monday afternoon. Several UIS employees provided details and copies of the e-mail memo sent by Ringeisen.

The chancellor says the university system, like other private and public organizations, has been hit by an ongoing economic downtown, and the UIS campus faces major cost increases as it continues developing.

Ringeisen noted the U of I is fortunate to have "incremental financial support" committed from the state this year and additional money will come from new undergraduate students and graduate students who again will pay higher tuition.

The 1.5 percent increase will be merit-based and funded from tuition, state money and "internal reallocations," Ringeisen wrote.

The announcement comes two weeks after Gov. Rod Blagojevich made $1.4 billion in state budget cuts, including tens of millions of dollars for higher education programs. A 3.8 percent cost-of-living increase for state lawmakers and other top officials survived the cuts.

Ringeisen wrote that a small pool of additional money will be geared for the third year of a UIS program designed to ensure salary equity among faculty and staff.

"We will continue to monitor our financial situation," Ringeisen wrote. "If circumstances permit in early 2009, we may consider doing more. I will keep you apprised of further developments as the year progresses."